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Physical Fitness Assessment Checklist for Special Education

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Special health care needs for students with disabilities require an assessment prior to any physical activity. Cognitive abilities and social skills must be included in the health educator's assessment of how the special health care need will impact participation. Physical education programs are designed to meet each student's goals and provide inclusive experiences for all students.

Level of Exertion

Use resources available through the Surgeon General's report for physical activity to effectively manage special needs students' levels of exertion. Special needs students with cardiac disorders, neurological problems, cystic fibrosis and Down syndrome require adapted physical education. There are adaptive programs to include students in physical education with these or other health conditions.

Recognize any specific health concerns prior to including disabled students in an activity and make appropriate modifications for their participation.

Motor Skills

Physical activities that provide skills assessments for special needs students include running, jumping, catching, throwing, stretching and balance. Gross motor skills improvement can be documented from the initial assessment within these categories. Include a balance and coordination assessment within any sports activity, such as volleyball, basketball or tennis.

Cognitive Ability

A key component to special needs physical education assessment is the student's cognitive ability. Evaluate and assess the student's ability to take direction, his willingness to complete a task and his interactions with other students. Modify activities to promote inclusion for the student's understanding. Log physical behavior specific to the student's special needs under cognitive ability, such as managing frustration or eye contact.

Recommendations

Include some type of recommendation in your physical fitness assessment, but consult with other teachers or staff assigned to the student prior to making any recommendations. Phrase the recommendations as summaries, progress or next steps. Discuss the role in which your observations were made; for example, as a coach, physical health educator, fitness professional, etc. Clearly explain each recommendation and the reasoning from your assessment of motor skills and cognitive ability observations. Recommendations can include sports skill activities, strength training, cardiovascular training, flexibility training or social development. Other types of program activities can also be suggested in this section of the assessment, such as social skills or mind-body activities.

Resources

- [APENS: Instructional Design](#)
- [NCPAD.org](#)
- [CDC: Report to the Surgeon General](#)